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Title:

TOY WATER GUN SYSTEM WITH DETACHABLE WEAPONS

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TOY WATER GUN SYSTEM WITH DETACHABLE WEAPONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates generally to a toy water squirt gun and, more particularly, to a pressurized toy water squirt gun having a primary squirt gun and one or more detachable water weapons.

[0002] Pressurized squirt guns that eject water from a pressurized reservoir are generally known in the art. For example, U.S. Patent No. 5,074,437 to D'Andrade et al. discloses a toy water gun that operates by releasing water from a water reservoir that is pressurized by air. The reservoir is pressurized using a manually operated air pump. When a trigger is operated, water is released under pressure from the reservoir through an outlet nozzle.

[0003] A number of additional water-based toy guns or other water-based toy weapons exist in the prior art. For example, U.S. Patent No. 4,854,480 to Shindo discloses a squirt gun having a hollow housing and having an expandable rubber tube disposed within the hollow housing. A trigger squeezes or pinches a portion of the rubber tube against the housing to close off an outlet nozzle. Pressurized water is released from the rubber tube upon rotating the trigger, which releases the squeezed portion of the tube so that water may be dispensed from the outlet nozzle. Another water-based toy weapon can be found in U.S. Patent No. 5,354,225 to Hix, which discloses a toy water grenade. A housing includes a fluid chamber surrounded by a pneumatic chamber. A piston member is arranged for sliding movement along the reservoir chamber upon release of a pin. Upon movement of the piston, exit ports are exposed and water is expelled from the fluid chamber.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In one aspect, the invention is directed to a toy water gun system comprising a primary water gun having a housing, a pressurizable reservoir, an outlet nozzle in flow communication with the reservoir, and an actuating trigger, with the primary toy water gun adapted to discharge an output stream of water through the outlet nozzle in response to actuation of the trigger. The housing of the primary water gun includes a first receiving area and a second receiving area, each of the first and second receiving areas having an output port, the output port of the first receiving area in flow communication with the reservoir via a first conduit, the output port of the second receiving area in flow communication with the reservoir via a second conduit. A first valve is positioned to control flow through the first conduit, and a second valve is positioned to control flow through the second conduit. A first detachable water toy is sized for mounting to the housing at the first receiving area and is arranged to receive water from the reservoir via the output port of the first receiving area in response to operation of the first valve. A second detachable water toy is sized for mounting to the housing at the second receiving area and is arranged to receive water from the reservoir via the output port of the second receiving area in response to operation of the second valve. The first and second detachable water toys are selectively removable from the primary water gun for use.

[0005] In further accordance with a preferred embodiment, the first detachable water toy includes a pressurizable reservoir, an outlet nozzle in communication with the reservoir, and an actuating trigger, with the first detachable water toy adapted to discharge an output stream of water through the outlet nozzle of the first detachable water toy in response to actuation of the trigger of the first

detachable water toy. The first receiving area may include a spring-loaded plunger positioned to releasably retained the first detachable water toy in the first receiving area. Still preferably, the first detachable water toy includes an inlet port positioned to receive water from the output port of the first receiving area, and the spring-loaded plunger is adapted to maintain the inlet port of the first water toy in flow communication with the output port of the first receiving area when the first detectable water toy is disposed in the first receiving area.

[0006] The second detachable water toy may comprise a sponge, and the sponge may be throwable. Preferably, the second receiving area may include a first panel disposed adjacent the output port of the first receiving area and a second panel spaced away from the first panel, with the first and second panels cooperating to releasably retain the second detachable water toy in the second receiving area. The first and second panels may be shaped to correspond to the shape of the second detachable water toy.

[0007] The first and second valves may be spring-loaded, and the trigger of the primary water gun may be slidably mounted to the housing. The primary water gun may include a primary valve disposed adjacent the outlet nozzle, the primary valve operatively connected to trigger by a connecting rod.

[0008] In another aspect of the invention, a primary water gun includes a housing, a reservoir, an outlet nozzle in flow communication with the reservoir, an actuating trigger, and an outlet valve disposed adjacent the outlet nozzle and responsive to actuation of the trigger, with the primary toy water gun adapted to discharge an output stream of water through the outlet nozzle in response to actuation of the trigger. The housing of the primary water gun further includes a first receiving

area and a second receiving area, with each of the first and second receiving areas having an output port. The output port of the first receiving area is in flow communication with the reservoir via a first conduit, and the output port of the second receiving area is in flow communication with the reservoir via a second conduit. A first valve is positioned to control flow through the first conduit, and a second valve is positioned to control flow through the second conduit. A first detachable water toy is removably attached to the first receiving area and includes an expandable bladder, a nozzle in communication with the bladder, and an actuating trigger, with the first detachable water toy adapted to discharge an output stream of water through the nozzle in response to actuation of the trigger. The bladder of the first detachable water toy is arranged to receive water through the nozzle from the reservoir of the primary water gun via the output port of the first receiving area in response to operation of the first valve. A second detachable water toy is removably attached to the second receiving area, with the second detachable water toy arranged to receive water from the reservoir via the output port of the second receiving area in response to operation of the second valve. Accordingly, the first and second detachable water toys are selectively removable from the primary water gun for use.

[0009] In accordance with a still further aspect of the invention, a toy water gun system includes a primary water gun having a housing, a reservoir, an outlet nozzle in flow communication with the reservoir, an actuating trigger, and an outlet valve disposed adjacent the outlet nozzle and responsive to actuation of the trigger. The primary water gun is adapted to discharge an output stream of water through the outlet nozzle in response to actuation of the trigger. The outlet valve includes a trip mechanism shiftable between a first position in which flow through the outlet nozzle

is prevented, a second position in which flow through the outlet nozzle is permitted, and a third position different from the first position in which flow through the outlet nozzle is prevented, with the trip mechanism being shiftable between the first, second and third positions in response to movement of the trigger between a first position, a second position, and a third position, respectively. The housing of the primary water gun further includes a first receiving area and a second receiving area, each of the first and second receiving areas having an output port, the output port of the first receiving area in flow communication with the reservoir via a first conduit, the output port of the second receiving area in flow communication with the reservoir via a second conduit. A first valve is positioned to control flow through the first conduit, and a second valve is positioned to control flow through the second conduit. A first detachable water toy is removably attached to the first receiving area and includes an expandable bladder, a nozzle in communication with the bladder, and an actuating trigger, with the first detachable water toy adapted to discharge an output stream of water through the nozzle in response to actuation of the trigger. The bladder of the first detachable water toy is arranged to receive water through the nozzle from the reservoir of the primary water gun via the output port of the first receiving area in response to operation of the first valve. A spring-loaded plunger is positioned to bias at least a portion of the first detachable water toy into engagement with the housing. A second detachable water toy is removably attached to the second receiving area, the second detachable water toy arranged to receive water from the reservoir via the output port of the second receiving area in response to operation of the second valve. The first and second detachable water toys are selectively removable from the primary water gun for use.

[0010] In accordance with yet another aspect in the invention, a toy gun system comprises a primary toy gun having a housing, a pressurizable reservoir, a launch station in flow communication with the reservoir, an actuating trigger, and an actuator arranged to release pressure from the reservoir through the launch station, the launch station adapted to hold and release a foam projectile in response to actuation of the actuator. The housing of the primary toy gun further includes a receiving area, the receiving area having an output port in flow communication with the reservoir via a conduit. A valve is positioned to control flow through the first conduit, and a detachable toy gun is removably attached to the first receiving area. The detachable toy gun includes a pressurizable reservoir, a launch station in flow communication with the reservoir, and an actuator arranged to release pressure from the reservoir through the launch station. The launch station is adapted to hold and release a foam projectile in response to actuation of the actuator. The detachable toy including an input port arranged to route pressure from the output port of the receiving area to the reservoir of the detachable toy gun. The detachable toy is selectively operable to launch the foam projectile when the detachable toy is in the receiving area and when the detachable toy is removed from the receiving area.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a toy water gun system assembled in accordance with the teachings of the present invention;

[0012] Fig. 2A is a partial cut away view in perspective of the toy water gun system of Fig. 1;

[0013] Fig. 2B is a partial cut away elevational view of the toy water gun system shown in Figs. 1 and 2A;

[0014] Fig. 3 is an enlarged fragmentary view in perspective of a forward portion of the primary water toy and illustrating a first detachable water toy;

[0015] Fig. 4 is an enlarged fragmentary view in perspective similar to Fig. 3 and showing a spring-loaded plunger disposed within a portion of the housing;

[0016] Fig. 5 is an enlarged fragmentary view in perspective similar to Fig. 4 and illustrating one possible manner by which the first detachable water toy may be removed from the primary water toy;

[0017] Fig. 6 is an enlarged fragmentary view in perspective illustrating the second detectable water toy disposed in the second receiving area;

[0018] Fig. 7 is an enlarged fragmentary view in perspective similar to Fig. 6 and illustrating the second detachable water toy being removed from the second receiving area;

[0019] Fig. 8 is an enlarged fragmentary bottom plan view of a trip valve mechanism illustrated in a first position;

[0020] Fig. 9 is an enlarged fragmentary bottom plan view similar to Fig. 8 and illustrating the trip valve mechanism in a second position;

[0021] Fig. 10 is an enlarged fragmentary bottom plan view similar to Figs. 8 and 9 and illustrating the trip valve mechanism in a third position;

[0022] Fig. 11 is an enlarged elevational view, partly in cutaway, of the first detachable water toy;

[0023] Fig. 12 is an enlarged fragmentary view in perspective of the interior of the first detachable water toy; and

[0024] Fig. 13 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view illustrating various elements of the reservoir pressurizing mechanism.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF VARIOUS EMBODIMENTS

[0025] Although the following text sets forth a detailed description of an exemplary embodiment of the invention, it should be understood that the legal scope of the invention is defined by the words of the claims set forth at the end of this patent. The detailed description is to be construed as exemplary only and does not describe every possible embodiment of the invention since describing every possible embodiment would be impractical, if not impossible. Numerous alternative embodiments could be implemented, using either current technology or technology developed after the filing date of this patent, which would still fall within the scope of the claims defining the invention.

[0026] It should also be understood that, unless a term is expressly defined in this patent using the sentence “As used herein, the term ‘_____’ is hereby defined to mean...” or a similar sentence, there is no intent to limit the meaning of that term, either expressly or by implication, beyond its plain or ordinary meaning, and such term should not be interpreted to be limited in scope based on any statement made in any section of this patent (other than the language of the claims). To the extent that any term recited in the claims at the end of this patent is referred to in this patent in a manner consistent with a single meaning, that is done for sake of clarity only so as to not confuse the reader, and it is not intended that such claim term be limited, by implication or otherwise, to that single meaning. Finally, unless a claim element is defined by reciting the word “means” and a function without the recital of any structure, it is not intended that the scope of any claim element be interpreted based on the application of 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph.

[0027] Referring now to Figs. 1, 2A and 2B of the drawings, a toy water gun system assembled in accordance with the teachings of the present convention is shown and is generally referred to by the reference numeral 10. The toy water gun system 10 includes a primary water gun 12 having a housing 14 and a reservoir 16 disposed within or otherwise attached or mounted to the housing 14. The reservoir 16 is visible in Figures 2A and 2B. Alternatively, the housing 14 may take the form of a frame, or any other suitable structure. The reservoir 16, in accordance with the disclosed example, is preferably pressurizable as will be explained in greater detail below. Also, the primary water gun may include a separate reservoir 17 operatively connected to the reservoir 16 via a system of conduits or other suitable connections as will be described in greater detail below. The reservoir 17 includes a fill cap 19, which is preferably removable to permit filling of the toy gun 12. Other suitable systems of the type known in the art for filling the toy gun may be used, such as those systems that permit the toy gun 12 to be filled by connection to a garden hose.

[0028] As shown in Figs. 2A and 2B, the primary water gun includes an outlet nozzle 18 in flow communication with the reservoir 16 via a conduit 20. A valve assembly 22 is disposed adjacent the outlet nozzle 18 and is operatively connected to a trigger 24 via a linkage 26. As will be explained in greater detail below, when the reservoir 16 is pressurized the primary water gun 12 will eject or shoot a stream of water the from the outlet nozzle 18 in response to operation of the trigger 24.

[0029] Referring to Figures 1 and 2A, the housing 14 includes a first receiving area 28 and a second receiving area 30. As shown in Figure 2A, the first receiving area 28 is in flow communication with the reservoir 16 via a conduit 32.

The conduit 32 includes an output port 34, and a valve 36 having a switch or handle 38. The valve 36 may be a rotary valve or any other suitable valve. Preferably, a rotary spring 40 is provided adjacent the handle 38 in order to maintain the valve 36 in a closed position.

[0030] Similarly, the second receiving area 30 is in flow communication with the reservoir 16 via a conduit 42. The conduit 42 includes an output port 44, and a valve 46 having a switch or handle 48. Again, the valve 46 may be a rotary valve or any other suitable valve. Preferably, a rotary spring 50 is provided adjacent to the handle 48 in order to maintain the valve 46 in a closed position. It will be understood that, upon operation of the valve 36 using the handle 38, that output port 34 may be placed in flow communication with the reservoir 16 via the conduit 32. Similarly, it will be understood that upon operation of the valve 46 using the handle 48, that the output port 44 may be placed in flow communication with the reservoir 16 via the conduit 42.

[0031] The toy water gun system 10 further includes a first detachable water toy 52 and a second detachable water toy 54. The first detachable water toy 52, in accordance with the disclosed example, takes the form of a water pistol. The water toy 52 is preferably sized to be releasably mounted to the first receiving area 28 of the primary water gun 12. Similarly, the water toy 54 is preferably sized to be releasably mounted to the second receiving area 30 of the primary water gun 12. The second water toy 54, in accordance with the disclosed example, preferably is constructed of an absorbent material, such as a sponge 56 covered by a water permeable cover 58. Alternatively, both water toys 52 and 54 may be water pistols, both may be absorbent sponges, or one or both may take the form of any other suitable water toy.

[0032] The first water toy 52 includes a nozzle 60 (best visible in Figures 2A, 5 and 11-12) and an internal reservoir 62 (Figures 11 and 12) in flow communication with the nozzle 60. As shown in Figure 2A, when the water toy 52 is disposed in the first receiving area 28, the nozzle 60 is positioned for flow communication with the output port 34 of the first receiving area 28. Similarly, when the second water toy 54 is disposed in the second receiving area 30, the second water toy (i.e., the sponge 56), is positioned so as to be in flow communication with, or otherwise exposed to, the output port 44 of the second receiving area 30.

[0033] Referring to Figures 2A and 2B, the reservoir 16 of the primary water gun 12 may be a pressurized toy water squirt gun having a self-contained pressurizing mechanism 64 for pressurizing the reservoir 16 with air, thereby creating a pressure differential between the reservoir 16 and the ambient atmosphere so that water contained in the reservoir 16 may be propelled from the primary toy water gun 12 through the outlet nozzle 18 when the user pulls the trigger 24. The pressurizing mechanism 64 includes a reciprocating pump handle 66, a pair of one way valves 67 and 69, and an over pressure valve 71. As will be explained in greater detail below, in response to operation of the pressurizing mechanism 64 using the handle 66, water contained in the reservoir 17 will be transferred into the reservoir 16. One example of a toy water gun having a pressurizing mechanism for propelling water from a pressurizeable reservoir is illustrated and described in U.S. Patent No. 5,305,919, entitled "Pinch Trigger Hand Pump Water Gun with Non-Detachable Tank," which issued on April 26, 1994, and which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference herein in its entirety. Of course, other configurations of toy water guns having

pressurizing mechanisms for propelling water are well known and will be understood by those skilled in the art.

[0034] Referring still to Figures 2A and 2B, the valve assembly 22 is disposed within the housing 14 generally adjacent to a forward end 68 of the primary water gun 12. The trigger 24 is preferably slidable on a track 70 disposed within a trigger guard 72 generally adjacent to a rearward end 74 of the primary water gun 12. A portion of the trigger guard 72 may also form a handle for gripping the primary water gun 12, with another handle preferably being provided toward a forward portion of the gun at any suitable location. Instead of a reciprocating trigger, the trigger 24 may be a pivoting trigger or any other trigger suitable for activating the valve assembly 22. The linkage 26 includes a first rod 76 connected to a forward end of the trigger 24, a second rod 78 connected to the valve assembly 22, and a sliding tube 80 operatively connecting the first rod 76 to the second rod 78. The linkage 26 may join the trigger 24 to the valve assembly 22 in any other suitable manner. In the disclosed example, the sliding tube 80 fits over one of the internal conduits of the pressurizing mechanism 64 so as to guide the sliding tube 80 along a generally linear path in response to operation of the trigger 24. In the disclosed example, the tube 80 includes a pair of spaced apart extensions 82a and 82b which meet at a top end 83. A rear end 78a of the rod 78 is attached to the top end 83 of the tube 80. In the disclosed example, the tube 80 straddles another one of the internal conduits, such that the tube 80 slides back and forth without interference from the internal components of the primary water gun 12. Accordingly, operation of the trigger 24 is translated into generally linear movement of the rods 76 and 78 and the tube 80, such that the valve assembly 22 is actuated in response to actuating the trigger 24.

[0035] Referring now to Figures 3-5, the first water toy 52 is shown disposed in the first receiving area 28. The first receiving area 28 preferably includes a spring-loaded plunger 29 which engages a recess 31 defined in a rearward part 33 of the first water toy 52. As can be seen in Figure 15, a forward part 35 of the first water toy 52 and/or a tip of the water toy 52 is preferably shaped to be received in a recess 37 defined in the first receiving area 28 generally surrounding or otherwise adjacent to the output port 34 of the first receiving area 28.

[0036] Referring now to Figures 6-7, in accordance with the disclosed example the second receiving area 30 includes a pair of spaced apart panels 39 and 41. The panels 39 and 41 are connected by an arm 43, such that a space 45 is defined between the panels 39 and 41. As can be seen in Figure 6, when the second water toy 54 is disposed in the second receiving area 30, the second water toy 54 is disposed between the panels 39 and 41. Preferably, the panels 39 and 41 may be curved or otherwise shaped so as to correspond to or generally complement the shape of the second water toy 54.

[0037] Referring now to Figures 8, 9, and 10, the valve assembly 22 (the underside of which is shown) may include a trip assembly 84 which is operatively connected to the trigger 24 via the linkage 26. The trip assembly 84 controls the actuation of the valve assembly 22 and enables the user to shoot water as desired. The trip assembly 84 includes a pivot plate 86 which pivots about a pivot point 86a. A forward end 78b of the rod 78 is attached to the pivot plate 86. The pivot plate 86 includes a slot 88 having a pair of ends 88a and 88b, and a stop screw 90 is mounted so as to extend through the slot 88. A lever 92 is operatively connected to a conventional rotary valve 94 disposed within the valve assembly 22, and the lever 92

is pivotable about a pivot point 92a. The lever 92 is connected to the plate 86 by a link arm 96 which fits within a slot 98 in the pivot plate 86. The slot 98 includes a pair of ends 98a and 98b. A spring 100 is connected to the pivot plate 86 at 100a and to the lever 92 at 100b. When the plate 86 and the lever 92 are positioned as shown in Figure 8, the rotary valve 94 is off, such that no water will be ejected from the outlet nozzle 18.

[0038] Referring now to Figure 9, when the trigger 24 is retracted (to the left when viewing Figure 9) from an initial position shown in Figure 8 to an intermediate position of Figure 9, the rod 78 pulls on the pivot plate 86, causing the pivot plate 86 to shift in a generally clockwise direction about the pivot 86a. In the process, the end 88b of the link arm 96 pulls the lever 92, causing the lever 92 to rotate in a generally counterclockwise direction about the pivot point 92a, thus opening the rotary valve 94 such that water may be ejected from the nozzle 18.

[0039] Referring now to Figure 10, when the trigger 24 is displaced sufficiently to the left to a fully retracted position as shown in Figure 10, the pivot plate 86 may pivot sufficiently far that the stop screw 90 comes into contact with the end 88b of the slot 88. Eventually, the spring with 100 will pass the pivot 92a, which causes the spring 100 to apply a further biasing force to the lever 92, thereby causing the lever 92 to rotate more rapidly in the counter-clockwise direction about the pivot point 92a. The link arm 96 may come into contact with the end 98a of the slot 98, thus limiting the rotational movement of the lever 92. The valve 94 may be arranged such that the valve is turned fully on when the lever 92 is rotated far enough. Releasing the trigger 24 will permit the trip assembly 84 to return to the position of Figure 8.

[0040] Consequently, in accordance with the disclosed example, the trip assembly 84 serves to define three possible positions for the rotary valve 94. These positions include a first position shown in Figure 8 (in which the rotary valve 94 is closed), a second position shown in Figure 9 (in which the rotary valve 94 is in a partially open position), and a third position shown in Figure 10 (in which the rotary valve 94 is in a fully open position). Other configurations may be chosen, including by way of example rather than limitation, a closed position and one or more open positions for the rotary valve 94. As a still further alternative, the toy water gun 12 may simply be provided with a more conventional valve at the outlet nozzle 18 of the type that is commonly employed in toy water guns. Additional description of the valve 22 and/or the trip assembly 84 can be found in U.S. Patent No. 6,631,830, entitled "Snap Action Ball Valve Assembly and Liquid Dispenser Using the Same", the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0041] Referring now to Figures 11 and 12, the first detachable water toy 52 is shown therein in greater detail. In accordance with the disclosed example, the first water toy 52 preferably includes a spring-loaded check valve 102 disposed generally adjacent to the forward end 35 of the water toy 52. It will be understood that a tip 104 of the nozzle 60 may be placed in flow communication with the output port 34 of the first receiving area 28 such that water flowing through the conduit 32 may be routed into the reservoir 62 of the water toy 52 upon operation of the rotary valve 36 as will be explained in greater detail below. It will further be understood that the tip 104 reciprocates to the left and the right when viewing Figure 12, such that the check valve 102 can be opened or closed. When tip 104 is shifted toward the left when viewing Figure 12, such as when the water toy 52 is disposed in the receiving area 28,

the check valve 102 is open such that water under pressure may flow into the reservoir 60. Alternatively, the check valve 102 may be arranged such that the check valve 102 opens in response to the pressure when the reservoir 16 is pressurized and the valve 36 is opened to route pressurized water through the port 34 and into the nozzle 60 and hence into the reservoir 62. A trigger 106 is provided and is operatively connected to the check valve 102, such that the water toy 52 may be operated by opening and closing the check valve 102 using the trigger 106.

[0042] Referring now to Figure 13, the fluid flow path of the primary water gun 12 will be described in greater detail. The fill cap 19 of the second reservoir 17 may be removed such that water or any other suitable fluid may be placed in the second reservoir 17. The second reservoir 17 is connected to a one-way valve 108 by a conduit 110. The pressurizing mechanism 64 includes a plunger 112, which reciprocates within a tubular conduit 114 upon reciprocal operation of the handle 66. Another one-way valve 116 is provided, and is connected to the first one-way valve 108 by a conduit 118. The one-way valve 116 is also connected to the reservoir 16 by a conduit 120. An overpressure valve 122 is preferably provided, with the overpressure valve 122 in flow communication with both the conduits 110 and 118. The overpressure valve limits the maximum pressure within the reservoir 16.

[0043] To operate the pressurizing mechanism 64, a user (not shown), grips the handle 66 and slides the handle 66 generally to the right when viewing Figure 13 to create a vacuum in the conduit 114. The vacuum acting on the one-way valve 108 opens the valve 108 and allows fluid to flow from the reservoir 17 into the conduit 114. When the handle 66 is pushed to the left, the valve 108 closes and the water contained within the conduit 114 is forced through the conduit 118, through the one-

way valve 116, and into the reservoir 16 via the conduit 120. Consequently, the internal conduits, including the conduit 120 leading to the reservoir 16 as well as the conduits 32 and 42 leading to the first and second receiving areas 28, 30, respectively, all get filled with water. Additional water may be pumped into the reservoir 16 upon repeated actuation of the handle 66, such that any air within the reservoir 16 applies pressure to all of the water contained in the pressurized part of the system. The overpressure valve 122 prevents too much pressure buildup in the pressurizing mechanism 64 by routing water back into the conduit 110 and hence back into the reservoir 17.

[0044] When a user desires to operate the toy water gun system 10, the user may choose between the three water toys shown. Using the pressurizing mechanism 64 as described above, the appropriate pressure head is applied by reciprocating the handle 66 and forcing water into the system until the reservoir 16 is suitably pressurized. In the event the user wishes to eject water from the outlet nozzle 18 of the primary water gun 12, the user simply actuates the trigger 24 as described above.

[0045] The user may also desire to detach and use a selected one of the detachable water toys 52 and/or 54. In a preferred mode of operation, the user will first suitably pressurize the reservoir 16 using the pressurizing mechanism 64 as described above. In the event the user desires to operate the second water toy 54, the user manipulates the spring-loaded valve 46 disposed generally adjacent to the second receiving area 30, which allows pressurized water contained within the conduit 42 to flow out of the output port 44 and into the second water toy 54, thus soaking the second water toy 54. As can be seen in Figure 7, the user then releases the handle 48 of the valve 46, such that the rotary spring 50 returns the valve 46 to a closed position.

The user then removes the soaked second detachable water toy 54 from the second receiving area 30, and may then throw the second detachable water toy 54 or otherwise use the toy in any desired manner.

[0046] When the user desires to use the first water toy 52, the first detachable water toy 52 should be placed in the first receiving area 28, with the plunger 29 engaging the recess 31 on the rearward end 33 of the first detachable water toy 52, and with the forward end 35 disposed in the recess 37. Accordingly, the plunger 29 serves to bias the second detachable water toy 52 forwardly, such that the forward end 35 is pressed into the recess 37 so that the toy 54 may be suitably retained in the first receiving area 28. It will be noted that the nozzle 60 of the first detachable water toy 52 will be in flow communication with the output port 34 of the conduit 32. Further, when the forward end 35 of the first detachable water toy 52 is in contact with the recess 37 under the biasing force of the plunger 29, the check valve will permit flow communication between the output port 34, the nozzle 60, and the reservoir 62.

When the user desires to fill the reservoir 62, assuming the reservoir 16 has been suitably pressurized using the pressurizing mechanism 64 as described above, the user simply manipulates the handle 38 so as to open the valve 36, which routes pressurized water through the output port 34 of the first receiving area 28, through the nozzle 60 of the first detachable water toy 52, and into the reservoir 62 contained within the first detachable water toy 52. When a quantity of pressurized water is contained within the reservoir 62, the user closes the rotary valve 36 by simply releasing the handle 38.

The first detachable water toy 52 is then ready to be removed from the first receiving area 28 in order to be used.

[0047] When the user desires to use the first detachable water toy 52, the user may rotate the first detachable water toy 52 from the position shown in Figures 3 and 4 toward the position illustrated in Figure 5, such that the user can grasp a handle portion of the first detachable water toy 52. The first detachable water toy 52 may then be pushed forwardly by the user so as to disengage the plunger 29 from the recess 31, thus permitting the water toy 52 to be removed from the first receiving area 28 by pulling the rearward end of the water toy 52 away from the housing 14. The water toy 52 may then be operated using the trigger 106 which opens the check valve 102, such that pressurized water contained within the reservoir 62 may be suitably ejected from the nozzle 60.

[0048] It will be understood that the toy water gun system 10 may include additional or fewer detachable water toys as desired. The number and location of the internal conduits may be readily adaptable to route pressurized water to the desired number of detachable water toys. It will also be understood that the water toy 52 may be suitably adapted to be fired while still attached to the primary water gun 12 at the first receiving station 28. For example, the water toy 52 may include one port for filling the reservoir inside the water toy 52, and a separate port or outlet nozzle to be used when firing the water toy 52 in a conventional manner.

[0049] The teachings of the present invention may also be applied to an air-operated toy gun system, in which a primary toy gun and/or one or more of the detachable toys are air-operated and are arranged to shoot, by way of example rather than limitation, soft foam projectiles using a blast of compressed air. In the event the toy gun system is arranged for air operation, each of the toy guns (i.e., the primary toy gun, the first detachable toy gun and the second detachable toy gun) each may be

provided with a suitable launching station of type that receives and holds a soft foam projectile in preparation for launch. Further, one or more of the toy guns may include an air tank that may be pressurized to hold compressed air for launching the projectiles. One example of a toy gun having an air tank that may be pressurized to launch foam projectiles is illustrated and described in U.S. Patent No. 5,515,837, entitled "Safety Nozzle for Multi-Shot Projectile Shooting Air Gun" which issued on May 14, 1996, and which is hereby expressly incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

[0050] When such a toy gun system is provided, it will be understood that the above-described internal conduits will route pressurized air to the appropriate output ports at their corresponding receiving areas, such that an air-operated detachable toy gun disposed in an appropriate one of the receiving areas may be pressurized via the output port at that receiving area using a corresponding one of the valves. Additionally, an air-operated toy gun disposed in one of the receiving areas may be arranged to be fired while still disposed in one of the receiving areas. In such an exemplary form, the air operated toy gun may be pressurized through an inlet port on the toy gun, and may include a second outlet port disposed adjacent a launching station of the foam projectile. A one way valve responsive to air pressure may be provided such that the detachable air-operated toy gun may be automatically pressurized when the primary toy gun is pressurized. The projectile of the detachable toy gun may be launched using a trigger attached to the detachable toy gun, or by actuating the trigger on the primary toy gun.

[0051] The preceding text sets forth a detailed description of numerous different embodiments of the invention, it should be understood that the legal scope of

the invention is defined by the words of the claims set forth at the end of this patent.

The detailed description is to be construed as exemplary only and does not describe every possible embodiment of the invention since describing every possible embodiment would be impractical, if not impossible. Numerous alternative embodiments could be implemented, using either current technology or technology developed after the filing date of this patent, which would still fall within the scope of the claims defining the invention.